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Interim Health Advisory

Date: May 13, 2009
To: All Providers
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH
Re: Interim Guidance for HINI Virus (Swine Influenza) in RI

Children with Developmental Disabilities and Chronic Medical Conditions

Certain children are at higher risk for complications from influenza illness. An investigation by CDC of 153 seasonal influenza-associated deaths among children during the 2003-2004 season found that 33% of the children had an underlying condition recognized to increase the risk of influenza-related complications, and 20% had other chronic conditions; 47% had previously been healthy. Chronic neurologic or neuromuscular conditions were present in one third, presumably of the children who were not previously healthy.

Children at higher risk for complications from influenza include:

- Infants <6 months.
- All children with immune suppression, chronic kidney disease, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma or other problems of the lungs, sickle cell disease, and those on long-term aspirin therapy for chronic disorders.
- Children with any condition that affects respiratory function, including neurological conditions such as intellectual and developmental disability, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, metabolic conditions or other neuromuscular disorders.
- Children with poor nutritional and fluid intake because of prolonged vomiting and diarrhea, and children with an underlying metabolic disorder such as medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase (MCAD) deficiency who are unable to tolerate prolonged periods of fasting.

Because many children with neurological or metabolic conditions may not have the ability to report onset or worsening of symptoms, delay in identification of influenza illness can lead to additional complications.

Primary care providers of certain children who are at higher risk for complications of influenza should continue to closely monitor patients. Using clinical judgment and severity of illness will be key to determining when such patients may need more aggressive or vigilant medical care.